

VAN GROOS, *et al.* – U.S. Pat. Appln. No. 10/797,657

Attorney Docket No.: 081468/0308363

- D R A F T A M E N D M E N T -

REMARKS

Reconsideration and the timely allowance of the pending claims, in view of the following remarks, are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action dated October 5, 2005, the Examiner rejected claims 1-10, 14-18, and 28, under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), as allegedly being anticipated by Nakano '645 (U.S. Patent Pub. No. 2002/0024645). The Examiner objected to claims 1, 17, and 28 as containing informalities and objected to the Abstract as being longer than one paragraph.

The Examiner indicated that dependent claims 11-13 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

By this Amendment, Applicants have amended claims 1, 7, 12-13, 17, and 28 to provide a clearer presentation of the claimed subject matter and have cancelled claim 11, without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants submit that no new matter has been introduced. As such, claims 1-10, 12-17, and 28 are currently presented for examination, of which claims 1, 17, and 28 are independent.

By virtue of the changes to claims 1, 17, and 28, the alleged informalities have been rectified. In addition, the Abstract has been amended to conform with the stated requirements. Accordingly, Applicants request the immediate withdrawal of the objections to the claims and Abstract.

Applicants respectfully traverse the prior art rejections, under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), for the following reasons.

As indicated above, amended independent claims 1, 17, and 28, now positively recite the use of a third load lock for transferring objects from a third environment to the second environment in which the third load lock is accessible from a side facing the third environment. As acknowledged by the Examiner, none of the references of record,

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- D R A F T AMENDMENT -

including the Nakano '645 reference, remotely teach such a feature. As such, none of the references of record teach the combination of elements recited by claims 1, 17, and 28.

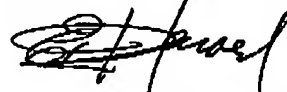
For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claims 1, 17, and 28 are patentable over the references of record. As such, Applicants respectfully request the immediate withdrawal of the rejection of independent claims 1, 17, and 28 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b). In addition, because claims 2-10 and 12-16 depend from claim 1, and claim 18 depends from claim 17, claims 2-10, 12-16, and 18 are patentable at least by virtue of dependency as well as for their additional recitations.

All matters having been addressed and in view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration of this application, and the immediate allowance of all pending claims.

Applicants' Counsel remains ready to assist the Examiner in any way to facilitate and expedite the prosecution of this matter. Please charge any fees associated with the submission of this paper to Deposit Account Number 033975. The Commissioner for Patents is also authorized to credit any over payments to the above-referenced Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: December 15, 2005
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